



Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

Revelation: The Seven Churches

The Church of Laodicea 4/25/2021

"You do not realize . . ." Rev. 3:17

"There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?" (Quote by David Foster Wallace).

The letter to the Church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22 is the last of the seven churches. Of all the commendations, confrontations, complaints, and corrections presented in the seven letters, this one may be the most disturbing. Jesus tells them, "You say you are this.... but you do not know you are actually this...." Not only are they wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked, and indifferent – they don't even know this is their truth. Not only does Jesus have to tell them their true state, but he also must reveal their complete self-deception.

When I want to be a better version of myself and I want to improve and grow, I am typically open to feedback that can give me direction and help me embrace change. But (in terms of the above analogy) if someone tells me there is something wrong with my water, and I don't even know what water is, my chances of accepting that feedback is slim to none. Jesus says that because he loves us, he offers correction and discipline. What should I do to hear it, receive it, and take it to heart?

The good news is that the Creator who made the water, the environment within which we live, is the One who is lovingly offering to reveal it to us. He comes to us and knocks at our door, and all we must do is hear his voice, open the door, and sit down and eat with him. Within this safe space he will help us overcome our self-deception and lead us and teach us to be victorious.

Self-diagnosis is blind within self-deception. Jesus invites us to enter into a greater relationship with him where he offers the diagnosis and opens our eyes so we can be diligent and turn from our indifference. We live in the watery environment of world systems in which we easily become blind. Are you willing to ask him to reveal what world systems you have simply not even been aware of?

So, Consider the following world systems and how they may be affecting your life:

1. Consumerism – Consumer mentality is the expectation that goods and services will be available to satisfy your needs. Do you see church as a place to satisfy your needs? Or is it a place to encourage and empower you to lean more into Jesus to grow, be filled, and give to others from the overflow?
2. Complacency – self-satisfaction hides within self-deception. This describes the church members in Laodicea. Their lives existed in dirty, tepid water when they could have been swimming in pure clean water. Is there more for you and your relationship with Jesus? Are you falling short of the rich victorious life He offers you?
3. Compromise – Has the freedom to believe decreased the intensity of your devotion? Is the fire of revival little more than a smoldering coal within you?
4. Cynicism – "...An embittered disposition of distrust born out of painful disillusionment ..." can find one on the edges of the church body, disappointed in – and disparaging of – others. Cynicism creeps slowly and silently into us and we are not even aware of it.
5. Criticism – "You look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own." (Matt. 7:3). "In the same way you judge others, you will be judged." (Matt. 7:1)

Take Action: This week, listen for Jesus' knock at the door, open it, sit and share a meal with him, and listen to him. Ask him to reveal to you those things hidden within your self-deception. Allow him to reveal the world systems that you aren't even aware dominate your life. Then, share a meal with a friend and ask them to be totally honest with you; what do they see that you don't see in yourself? Explore those things that prevent your total devotion to Jesus and surrender them. Ask your friend to pray with you and hold you accountable to grow in your new understanding.

*"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches." Rev. 3:22
May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ~Tess*